

## Hepatitis C facts

You cannot get hep C from kissing and hugging, sharing cigarettes, sharing food or drinks, coughing or sneezing, sharing toilets or from insect bites. You cannot get hep C from activities where there is not blood-to-blood contact.



Some infected people have no symptoms and may not know they are spreading the virus. Some people clear the virus naturally, but they can become reinfected if they come into contact with the virus again. There are several different strains of hep C, and it is possible to be infected with more than one strain. Having one type of hep C will not protect you from the other strains.

## What's involved in getting tested?

If you think you might have hep C you should get tested. When you go for the hep C test a doctor or health care worker will ask you some questions about risk factors, and then take a blood sample.

The sample will be sent to a laboratory. You will have to wait a little while for the results to come back.

If your results are negative (that is, show you do not have hepatitis C) the health care worker can help you with some strategies to avoid getting hep C. This is especially important if you are someone who injects drugs because this can be a very risky behaviour. (Even if your tests are negative you may need another test in three months time because it can take this long for the virus to show up).



If your test is positive (that is, shows you may have hepatitis C) the health care worker will have a yarn with you about doing some more tests. These tests will identify if you have the hep C virus in your blood. This information is important as it will help you make some decisions around your hep C. Your health care worker will also talk to you about how to manage your hep C, and how to avoid spreading the virus to your family and community.



## What about treatment?

The type and length of treatment depends on what type of hep C you have. Everyone reacts differently and sometimes people feel very unwell from the treatment side effects. If you decide to have hep C treatment your health care worker will discuss all this with you, help you make good plans, and provide you with support.

For more information about hepatitis C and hepatitis C testing you can contact:

### HepatitisWA

[www.hepatitiswa.com.au](http://www.hepatitiswa.com.au)  
Education, information and support  
Provides needle & syringe program  
Information & support line: 9328 8538  
Freecall 1800 800 070 Email: [info@hepatitiswa.com.au](mailto:info@hepatitiswa.com.au)

### WA Substance Users' Association (WASUA)

[www.wasua.com.au](http://www.wasua.com.au)  
Needle & Syringe Exchange Program  
Treatment, referral service & peer education  
Information: 9321 2877

### Alcohol & Drug Information Service (ADIS)

[www.dao.health.wa.gov.au](http://www.dao.health.wa.gov.au)  
24 hr counselling & information line  
Info line: 9442 5000 Toll free: 1800 198 024



Produced by the  
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Drug and Alcohol Office

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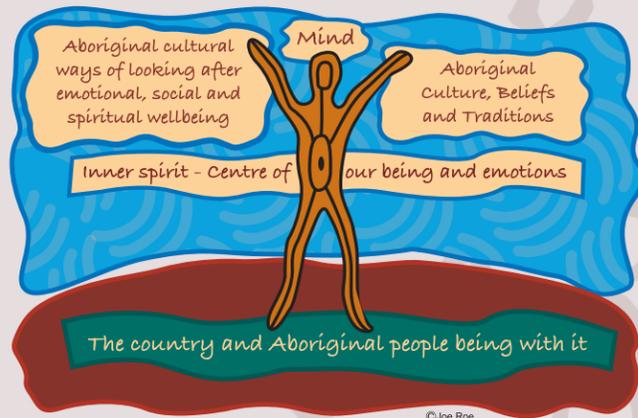
Strong Spirit Strong Mind

Aboriginal Ways of Reducing Harm  
From Alcohol and Other Drugs

Understanding hepatitis C –  
what our people need to know

HP11658

## ABORIGINAL INNER SPIRIT MODEL



## Alcohol and other drugs can tangle your spirit and weaken your spirit and your connections with family, community and country

Our way of being healthy is to look after ourselves by making good choices, and to care for our family, community and culture. Alcohol and drugs can tangle and weaken our spirit and mind. This can affect our emotional, social, spiritual and physical well being. This can weaken our connection to family, community, culture and country.



Our inner spirit in the centre of our being and emotions.

When our spirit feels strong our mind feels strong.

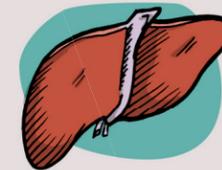
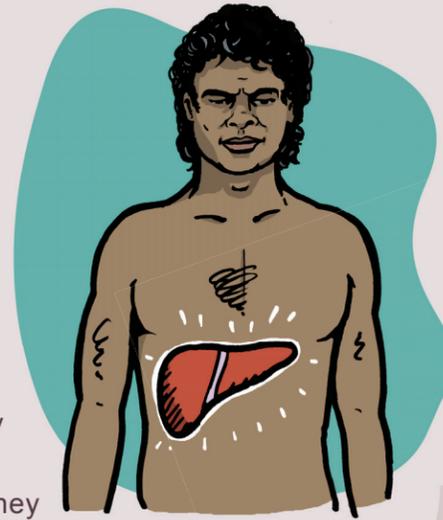
When our spirit feels tangled our minds feel tangled.

Strong inner spirit is what keeps people healthy and keeps them connected together.

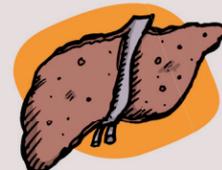
Strong inner spirit keeps out family strong, our community strong and our country alive.

## What is hepatitis C (hep C)?

Hep C is a blood-borne virus (BBV). Some people with this virus do not have any symptoms, and may not know they have the virus. For most people infection may not cause serious illness. But some people become very sick because the hep C virus slowly damages the liver. Some people may even need to have a liver transplant.



Healthy liver



Inflamed liver



Cirrhosis

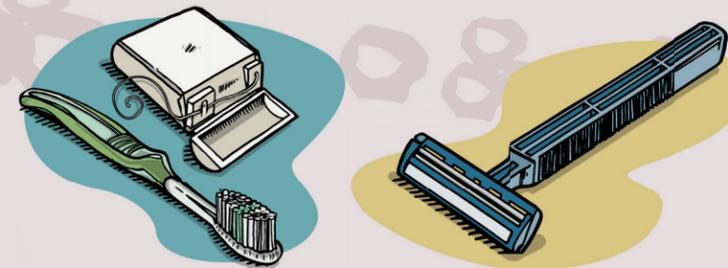
## How is hepatitis C spread?

Hep C is spread when blood from an infected person gets into another person's bloodstream. The most common way that people get hep C is from sharing needles and syringes when they are injecting drugs. Blood on hands, tourniquets, swabs, filters and in water can also spread the infection.



Hep C can also be spread by tattooing or piercing. Some household items which may have traces of blood, like razors or toothbrushes, can also spread hep C. Having been in prison can be a risk factor for hep C.

\*Some people may have got hep C from blood transfusions prior to 1990. Since then, the Australian blood supply has been tested for hep C and is considered to be safe.



Hep C can also be spread from fighting if there has been blood spilled, or from unprotected sexual activity if there is blood present.

There is a low risk of passing on hep C when giving birth or breastfeeding. Women who have hep C should talk to their health care worker about safe practices.

Care should be taken with ceremonial practices where blood may be exposed or shared.

